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25 July 1980

East Europe Report

POLITICAL, SOCIOLOGICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS

(FOUO 5/80)



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EAST EUROPE REPORT
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GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

CONTINUING ROLE OF CHRISTIANS UNDER SOCIALISM DISCUSSED

Hamburg STERN in German Vol 32 No 19, 30 Apr 80 pp 222, 224-225

[Interview by STERN correspondent Dieter Bub with Bishop Albrecht Schoenherr, chairman, Federation of GDR Protestant Churches: "'Despite Marx We Will Not Die': The Role of Christians in the GDR"]

[Text] [Question] Bishop Schoenherr: you have called up the Christians in the GDR to demonstrate more courage and to affirm their religious faith. Is this not a rather easy thing to do for a churchman who can move freely in East and West?

[Answer] Somewhat. I must admit it. But, it is my job to help the Christians find their way in a socialist society. We must be prepared to speak out, to say who we are.

[Question] In the aftermath of Pastor Bruesewitz's suicide, the church administration in the GDR was accused of making compromises, of kowtowing to the government and the party, of having no backbone.

[Answer] I think these accusations are not correct. But I did take the criticism in connection with the Bruesewitz case seriously to the effect that the church was pursuing secret policies the parishes could not understand. In the meantime, we have opened up communications with the parishes and have thrashed things out.

[Question] Can you honestly expect a courageous avowal of the church by young people in the GDR, if they might as a consequence face discrimination in education, in job training and in their professional life?

[Answer] We must expect all Christians, young or old, to affirm their faith. As for discrimination, things are not as bad as they were 2, 3 or 5 years ago. In those days, Christian children would be ridiculed in school once in a while. Today, such occurrences are rank exceptions. If they happen at all, they are frowned upon by the principals.

[Question] Two years ago, SED chief Honecker gave you the assurance that Christian and non-Christian youths would receive equal treatment. Has he kept this promise?

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[Answer] The word given by the Chairman of the State Council at that time applied to all Christians regardless of age so that one cannot use the schools alone as a yardstick to judge whether the promises were kept or not. We both agreed that it would not be all that simple to translate each and every one of the arrangements into reality soon.

[Question] In what areas were the most difficulties encountered?

[Answer] Wherever ideology was prominently involved, as for instance in the field of adult education and in the schools. In these areas equal treatment of children educated along Christian lines has not made too much headway.

[Question] You have mentioned a growing interest on the part of young people for the church. Does that imply they are turning toward Christianity or away from empty party slogans?

[Answer] The number of young people who concern themselves with the church and who take part in church music events and youth convocations is on the rise. Young people need an outlet for their emotions and at the moment this seems to many to be satisfied somewhat more in the church than in the meetings of the state youth organization. They know that they can talk to us about everything. In our midst the young people find a community they cannot find elsewhere--not even within the family because quite often both parents are working.

[Question] Does this not raise the possibility of the church being vilified by the state as a haven for opposition elements?

[Answer] We must not let this impression arise. We are not taking the field against socialism.

[Question] But the church should take sides.

[Answer] The church wants to support whatever is good for people. We maintain hospitals, old people's homes and nursing homes. But, in addition to these church-related tasks, we also have an obligation to support every measure which serves peace and detente.

[Question] And this gives you the right to take a position on the Soviet troops marching into Afghanistan, on the boycott of the Olympic Games and on NATO modernization plans.

[Answer] Yes. We earnestly warned against NATO modernization because we consider it a threat to peace. With regard to Afghanistan I have made only general comments so far and will continue to do just that.

[Question] What do you think the chances are for closer contacts between the church in the FRG and the GDR?

[Answer] The relations are very good; they do not need to be strengthened at this time.

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[Question] Relations between the church and the GDR leadership seem to have improved--still, the church is expected to die a slow death...

[Answer] According to Marxist theory, religion is to wither away once certain social conditions have changed. So far, we do not have the feeling that our end is near. But I cannot prevent anyone from believing that we will wither away.

[Question] Church membership in the GDR has fallen drastically. Some vicarages are vacant; day nurseries and community nursing stations have had to be closed.

[Answer] There are vacancies in all Regional Churches because of a large number of retirements recently and because there was a drop in the number of theology students a few years ago. But that has changed. We now have a sufficient number of theology students and expect the vacancies in the parishes to be filled within 4 or 5 years. In the case of the community nursing stations there just is not any young talent. We will be making an effort to remedy that. And as for church membership: about half the population of the GDR claims to be Christian; but the number of those actually taking part in church life unfortunately is far smaller.

[Question] In the new school regulations mention is made of the "communist education of youth"--in other words, there is no room for anyone who thinks differently. How will you defend yourself against this?

[Answer] We are not yet sure about what is meant by communist education. We will be talking to the State Secretary for Church Affairs in order to obtain a clarification.

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HUNGARY

EX-PREMIER ANDRAS HEGEDUS INTERVIEWED IN MILAN

Milan CORRIERE DELLA SERA in Italian 7 Jul 80 p 3

[Interview with former Prime Minister of Hungary Andras Hegedus by Pietro Sormani, of CORRIERE DELLA SERA, in Milan; date not given]

[Text] "Socialism in the East? That depends..."

"From an economic-sociological point of view, the socialist countries are those that have achieved industrialization without private property as the means of production. If, on the other hand, an ethical approach is adopted, the answer is no." I have appreciated, and I continue to appreciate, the concepts of Eurocommunism."

Milan--Head of government, eminent sociologist, an alien in his country: the political parable of Andras Hegedus symbolizes the drama of a people that was experienced during the brief span of a quarter century. But, beyond the case of Hungary, if one carries it further, it expresses all that is currently absurd and schizophrenic in the countries of "true socialism," where personal destinies are forced into very sensational changes by changeable ideological demands or by powerful interests.

Before becoming a victim, himself, Hegedus was an authoritative interpreter of these demands. A loyal Stalinist during the Rakosi era, at only 33 years of age he was appointed to the leadership of Hungarian power. However, only 1 year later, overthrown by popular protest, he was obliged to take refuge in the Soviet Union. The trauma changed him and induced him to give up politics and to devote himself to the study of sociology. The man who returned to Budapest during the first stage of the Kadarian repression was a completely different man from the one who had left--more learned and certainly more human.

He thus began his profitable activity as a student, as a researcher at the Institute of Economics, then as vice president of the Central Statistics Office, finally as director of sociology in the Academy of Science. The name of Hegedus became identified with the "Budapest School," which represented the greatest effort in behalf of a critical review of Marxism that

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was made by any East European country. The invasion of Czechoslovakia brought another change to his life: his protest got him a professional demotion and, in 1973, expulsion from the party.

Since then, Hegedus has been living under special surveillance, privately pursuing his studies, but without being able to make known his results. In 8 years he was allowed to publish only one article and to hold one conference. Only recently, through one of the odd, typical contradictions of Hungarian life, he reacquired the right to go abroad. In recent days Hegedus participated in the conference in Rome on Bucahrin, organized by the Gramsci Institute.

I met him in Milan, at the home of friends. Nothing in his appearance makes one think of a brilliant statesman or an illustrious scholar. His thin grey hair, small beard and heavy build fit in better with his official status of retiree. He talks simply, in a calm voice. In spite of his seemingly ingenuous look, one every once in a while glimpses a flash of shrewdness. But his thinking is always clear, penetrating. He answered my questions without hesitation.

[Question] The conference on Bucharin constitutes a new step forward in the Italian Communist Party's analysis of Marxist thinking. Is there an analogous pursuit in East European countries?

[Answer] An ideological reevaluation of Bucharin is impossible with us. And that is too bad, because it results in an obstacle to the development of the Marxist theory. Bucharin advanced the concept of economic reform, but our leaders do not want to acknowledge him. Of course a new Bucharism is not acceptable today, under such different historic circumstances; but it is useful to single out its positive elements, for the contribution that they can make to the discussion. Moreover, there were many Trotskyites in Rome, too.

[Question] The "Budapest School," which in the past exerted a great deal of influence and gained prestige, today is practically dissolved. How was it possible for this to happen?

[Answer] The "Budapest School" never was a current of homogeneous thinking: it was always characterized by differences of method and of substance. There were two principal trends: one, an ethical-philosophical one; the other, sociological. The unfavorable circumstances that occurred in our country in 1973, also as a consequence of the events in Czechoslovakia, influenced many members, causing some among them to be inconstant. Some, like Agnes Heller, went to Australia, where they are pursuing their activities; others, instead, remained in their country and became identified with what we call "the second culture." Although it is no longer possible to

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speak of a "school," there are many relatively young students who are pursuing their studies. I recall from among others in the field of philosophy Georgy Beneze and Janos Kiss; and, in the field of sociology, Zoltan Zsille and Tamas Foldvari. And one must not neglect the cultural contributions of novelists like Konrad and Harazsti.

[Question] The teaching of the "Budapest School" was absorbed by some extremist fringes in Italy and was used to justify their forms of violent struggle.

[Answer] One must not generalize. The phenomenon that you have described pertains only to the works of Heller; as far as I am concerned, I am certain that I have never given cause for that type of problem. I am opposed to any form of terrorism and in this I adhere to Marxist tradition.

[Question] In the past, you expressed sympathy for "Eurocommunism;" and yet your positions are very different, and in some instances contrary, to those supported by the PCI.

[Answer] I have appreciated, and I continue to appreciate, the Eurocommunist concepts that propose to search for a new form of socialism that is valid for Western Europe. In East Europe there are two models of socialism: one, a Soviet type; and the other, a Yugoslav one. But neither of the two is applicable to the West. Western Europe must find different forms of socialism, forms that correspond more to its circumstances and traditions. On the other hand, I do not believe that Eurocommunism can serve as a model for East Europe. We must search for an alternative that, while acknowledging differences, makes it possible to adopt reforms--even radical ones--without destroying the existing system of power and without provoking a tragic confrontation among the social forces.

[Question] You have maintained that in socialist countries it is possible to create a pluralistic society without a multi-party political system. But has not historical experience perhaps demonstrated that a non-institutionalized pluralism has no hope of survival?

[Answer] I must explain: the fact that I believe a pluralism without parties is possible does not mean that I do not augur institutional-type reforms. For example, the workers' councils provided for in the Hungarian economic reform were an attempt at institutionalizing pluralism. Too bad that they remained on paper. Other forms of institutionalization could be the separation of town councils from bureaucratic power, or the unrestricted publication of books and magazines. In Hungary there are no fundamental obstacles to this kind of decision that, in my opinion, would strengthen Kadarism, protecting it from the absolute power of the leaders. Of course,

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not all are in agreement and discussions are in progress on this matter within the Hungarian opposition. But in general I believe that it may be said that pluri-partyism is rejected in all of the socialist countries. In 1956, too, demands for the creation of various parties were made only when the situation became uncontrollable. There was an analogous situation in Czechoslovakia in 1968, when the "Prague Spring" did not succeed in proposing an overall concept of democratic society. This obviously does not justify invasion.

[Question] In recent times we have witnessed an involution of the reform movement that appeared in many socialist countries at the end of the 70's. Do you think that it can be reactivated?

[Answer] Yes, of course. The need for reforms has increased, not diminished. And also reforms continue to exist in a latent form and will be able to emerge again under new circumstances. But if they are decreed from above, they will inevitably be unstable. Their success depends on the existence of initiatives and of a movement that comes from the base."

[Question] You had compared the results of the Hungarian economic reform to what happened to a donkey when the rope that restrained him broke. The donkey was placed in an enclosure of equal size. Is this how it is today?

[Answer] Yes, except that the enclosed area is smaller.

[Question] Is an economic reform possible without political reform?

[Answer] No, the 1968 Hungarian experience is very instructive in this regard. In my opinion, it would be better to adopt reforms that are less radical but more extensive. They must not come from above; the political reforms must be the legalization of demands from the base.

[Question] In the past you were optimistic about the possibility of the democratization of socialist countries. Are you still optimistic?

[Answer] It is the only hope for the socialism of the countries of the east to become a true alternative to bourgeois democracy. Otherwise its cause will be lost. But democratization cannot be attained in a few years. It is a long process that will be characterized by delays, failures, and accelerations. It will not be possible to radically change the situation in a short time.

[Question] In short, you believe that the countries of East Europe are truly socialist? Is socialism without democracy possible?

[Answer] From an economic-sociological point of view, these countries are socialist that have realized two criteria: the existence of the process of primary accumulation and of industrialization, and the absence of private

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property from the means of production. From this point of view, all of the countries of East Europe are socialist. If, instead, we adopt an ethical approach, the answer is no. But as for me the criteria that I have indicated are essential. Moreover, even a capitalist system does not stop being one because of the fact that it may be ruled by a dictatorial regime. However, it is useless to debate what socialism is, or should be. The important thing is to examine the specific forms it has taken and to try to improve them.

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POLAND

VENEZUELAN PAPER INTERVIEWS FOREIGN MINISTER WOJTASZEK

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[Text] Caracas, 7 Jun (PL)--Polish Foreign Minister Emil Wojtaszek has stated that his country supports the Latin American integration processes the objective of which is to promote economic growth.

In an interview published today by the newspaper EL NACIONAL, the foreign minister stressed the great importance of the development of Poland's relations with the Latin American countries and he noted that they maintain similar positions on essential international problems.

Wojtaszek charged that the policy of some U.S. sectors leads to an intensification of the arms race "which is the result of the decisions adopted by NATO in 1978 and 1979."

He referred to the problem of Afghanistan and indicated that his government views with deep concern "the activities of the international reactionary and imperialist forces." He added that in the attempts to prevent the revolutionary changes in that country "lie the roots and the direct causes of the tensions and instability in that Asian region."

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